

Communication from Public

Name: Bet Tzedek Legal Services

Date Submitted: 11/29/2023 11:03 AM

Council File No: 18-0610-S3

Comments for Public Posting: Thank you for the opportunity to provide written public comment on the Motion to establish Right to Counsel. Bet Tzedek Legal Services is a non-profit legal aid organization that provides free legal services to low-income residents of Los Angeles. Bet Tzedek's Preventing and Ending Homelessness Project and Eviction Defense Project serve and represent tenants in unlawful detainer cases throughout Los Angeles. Bet Tzedek thanks Councilmembers Raman and Blumenfield for introducing the motion to establish Right to Counsel. We strongly support the Right to Counsel ordinance. In our practice, we have witnessed that without legal representation or strong eviction protections, tenants will be wrongfully evicted and forced out of their homes, increasing homelessness. Yet, fewer than 10% of tenants receive legal representation. Eviction filings have risen to higher levels than before the COVID-19 pandemic. This means that we face both a shortage of attorneys who can represent tenants during negotiations with their landlords or at trial, and more tenants than ever who will face the eviction process in court. When tenants do have an attorney representing them, on the other hand, tenants are much more likely to be able to remain in their homes or receive a favorable settlement. For example, "Nathaniel" is a 97-year-old WWII veteran, who has lived in his apartment for years. After receiving a rent increase notice, Nate tried meeting with the management company about the increase, but they refused to meet with him, instead issuing a Pay or Quit notice when his increased rent became due. Nate explained to us that he wanted to stay in his apartment to stay close to his doctors, his friends, and the public library. We represented Nate and ultimately negotiated a pay and stay agreement. At court, Nate proudly wore his original WWII uniform to highlight the plight of veterans, particularly homeless veterans, in Los Angeles. After his court case was dismissed, Nate came out to support our "Right to Counsel" campaign. He made clear that he thought all tenants in LA should have access to the same expert services and advocacy he received. Nate's story is one of the countless examples that illustrate the importance of the Right to Counsel. Overall, a Right to Counsel ordinance and robust eviction protections will decrease homelessness and save money on costs associated with homelessness, such as shelters, healthcare, and foster care. Also,

since there are disproportionate eviction filings against people of color, particularly Black and Latine women, a right to counsel program will promote equitable access to justice, as well as racial and economic justice. Moreover, as of June 2023, homelessness in Los Angeles County has increased by nearly ten percent over the last year. We know that evictions correlate with homelessness. Because the Right to Counsel and strong eviction protections would help stop the displacement of families, the destabilization of our communities, and stave off a worsening of Los Angeles' homelessness crisis, we urge that you move the Right to Counsel ordinance forward.

Bet Tzedek Written Public Comment:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written public comment on the Motion to establish Right to Counsel. Bet Tzedek Legal Services is a non-profit legal aid organization that provides free legal services to low-income residents of Los Angeles. Bet Tzedek's Preventing and Ending Homelessness Project and Eviction Defense Project serve and represent tenants in unlawful detainer cases throughout Los Angeles. Bet Tzedek thanks Councilmembers Raman and Blumenfield for introducing the motion to establish Right to Counsel. We strongly support the Right to Counsel ordinance.

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Communication from Public

Name: Jessa McCormack

Date Submitted: 11/29/2023 12:48 PM

Council File No: 18-0610-S3

Comments for Public Posting: My name is Jessa McCormack and I am a renter in CD10. I work on housing justice issues with the Liberty Hill Foundation, and have the privilege of working with the tenant leaders and organizers you see today. I want to thank Councilmembers Raman and Blumenfield for introducing the motion to establish Right to Counsel. As a renter and as one of the many staff supporting Stay Housed LA, I want to strongly urge you to support a Right to Counsel ordinance. We have been telling you for years that eviction court is an uneven playing field. You know the stats, you have seen the numbers of eviction filings increase, have heard countless stories from tenants. Today you can make significant progress in stopping unnecessary eviction and displacement by passing Item 2. This motion will allow us to sustainably expand Stay Housed LA so we can serve everyone who receives an eviction notice. Passing this today means you understand that tenants have rights, and that they deserve to stay in a stable home and stable community. People come to Stay Housed LA overwhelmingly because they cannot pay rent. This has been the number one reason people come see us since we started the emergency program in 2020. For that reason I also urge you to pass Item 5 so we can have a full report on rental arrears and rent debt. Thank you.